

OUR NEW GERMAN POLICY AND THE DP's

Why Immediate Resettlement is Imperative

SAMUEL GRINGAUZ

ALMOST as tragic as the story of the extermination of the Jews, is that of the surviving Jewish remnant. It is a crowning irony that under present conditions the very fact that some European Jews were lucky enough to survive—that the mass murderers did not complete their work—today constitutes a threat to world peace. Because of these “lucky” survivors grave political and social tensions have arisen; because of them blood is being shed every day in the Holy Land; because of them the lives of eight hundred thousand Jews in the Middle and Near East are in immediate danger; because of them the United Nations has reached an impasse; because of them Jewish sentiment here in the United States has become nervous and uncertain. And as for the survivors themselves, they are compelled to go on living in the midst of the people who were the source of all their sufferings and humiliations.

SAMUEL GRINGAUZ's article “Jewish Destiny As the DP's See It,” published in the December 1947 COMMENTARY, evoked wide and continuing discussion both in this country and Europe. Here he returns to another aspect of this crucial problem: the new situation that has resulted from a shift in relationships between the DP's and the Germans, in consequence of new American occupation policy. Dr. Gringauz was three times president of the DP camp in Landsberg, Germany, and was also president of the Congress and Council of Liberated Jews in the American Zone of Germany. Born in 1900 in what was then East Prussia, he was scientific assistant at the Heidelberg Institute of Social Sciences until Hitler came to power. He then left Germany to become judge in the District Court of Appeals in Memel—and, eventually, an internee in a concentration camp. He is at present in the United States, where he is working on a study of the consequences of the war on European personality.

The problem of the survivors has its focal point in the American zones of Germany and Austria. This is where most of the Jewish DP's are located and where new refugees from the East have gathered. It is also becoming the nerve center of American world policy and the front line of American defense. Germany has ceased to be the unified objective of a single Allied postwar policy, but has broken down into fragmentary and conflicting objectives reflecting the East-West conflict. Germany is no longer our foe in a war not yet concluded, but a potential ally in a war that has not yet begun. The creation of a Western European bloc, and of a West German state to be included in the ERP, means exactly that. Germany is to be transformed from a defeated enemy into the guardian of our European front line. The Jewish survivors in the occupied zone of Western Germany are an obstacle to this development. What makes their situation intolerable is that they are still in acute conflict with the nation which Allied occupation policy wants to make into an ally.

That is the core of the present problem of the Jewish DP's.

IT is recognized that the question of our occupation policy in Germany has political implications far wider than even its importance for the American people and the German population. But under present circumstances, it is also a Jewish question, of special import for American Jews. The anti-German sentiment of the Jewish DP's in the occupation zone clashes with the American policy of supporting a West German state. If serious thought is not given to the problem, this unhappy conjuncture may result in fanning anti-Semitism both in

the American forces and in the German population, with the possibility of serious repercussions on Jewish life in Europe and America.

In the occupation zone, thousands of young Americans come in contact with Jewish DP's whose nerves have been rubbed sore by abnormal living conditions and by the constant Jew-baiting of German officialdom and private individuals. The deteriorating economic position of the DP's, their mounting political disillusionment and moral despair, the social tensions throughout Germany, due in large part to the breakdown of economic life into a controlled and a free (black) market—all these factors make for friction between the occupation forces and the DP's.

American political involvement in Western Germany is no short-term affair. Since the formation of the Western European Union, whose military front coincides with the Eastern boundaries of the occupation zone, the tie between the United States and the occupation zone has become an organic one and assumed long-term perspectives. The formation of a West German state would further strengthen this tie.

From the point of view of Jewish policy, the American zone in Germany must therefore be regarded as a part of the United States, and the treatment of the Jewish DP's by the occupation authorities must be considered as an element in American-Jewish relations as a whole.

A thorough examination of American occupation policy and its effect on the problem of the Jewish DP's thus becomes imperative.

THE policy of the American authorities towards the DP's can be divided into three periods—which might be called: the military-police period, the humanitarian period, and the political period.

In the first months after the liberation, the military police were in control. The DP's were penned up in camps surrounded by barbed wire and guarded by armed soldiers. Earl G. Harrison described the

situation in his report to President Truman (summer 1945): "Beyond knowing that they are no longer in danger of the gas chambers, torture and other forms of violent death, they see—and there is—little change. . . . They hear or see nothing in the way of plans for the future and consequently they wonder and frequently ask what 'liberation' means. As matters now stand, we appear to be treating the Jews as the Nazis treated them. One is left to wonder whether the German people seeing this are not supposing that we are following or at least condoning Nazi policy."

An end was put to this situation by a letter from President Truman to General Eisenhower on August 31, 1945. The President wrote: "You will agree with me that we have a particular responsibility towards these victims of persecution and tyranny who are now in our zone. We must make clear to the German people that we thoroughly abhor the Nazi policies of hatred and persecution. We have no better opportunity to demonstrate this than by the manner in which we ourselves actually treat the survivors remaining in Germany."

This letter of President Truman's inaugurated a new policy towards the DP's, the humanitarian policy. Unfortunately the new orientation came very late. Four months of a military-police regime had given the German population the impression that, at least in the treatment of Jews, the occupation had common elements with Nazi ideology. As for the Jewish DP's, disillusionment and suspicion had been born in their minds. Nevertheless, this new stage (autumn 1945 to summer 1947) was marked by an enormous growth of self-help organizations and self-administration; it was a period of moral and cultural rehabilitation; looking back, it seems a kind of golden age.

The humanitarian policy coincided with general political trends. According to the first directive to the Commander in Chief of the United States Forces of Occupation (released October 17, 1945), the principal Allied objective was "to prevent Germany from becoming a threat to the world" and to

bring home to the Germans "that they cannot escape responsibility for what they have brought upon the world and themselves." The occupation policy was anti-Nazi and anti-militaristic, directed against fundamental German attitudes; its main programmatic points were de-militarization, de-Nazification, punishment of war criminals and of criminals against humanity. These points were, of course, fully supported by Jewish opinion.

During this second period, the high-level policy of the American Army towards the Jewish DP's was guided by a profound understanding and a humane sympathy. As Commander in Chief of the Allied forces, General Eisenhower declared in a proclamation: "The liberation, care and repatriation of the DP is a major Allied objective." His successor, General Joseph McNarney, opened the borders of the American Zone to fugitives from Poland, organized orientation lectures in which Jewish representatives addressed groups of soldiers, and legalized self-government by the Jews, with a central council and a central committee. He forbade German police to enter Jewish camps and removed the DP's from German jurisdiction. A special directive ordered that arrested DP's were to be brought before a military court officer within twenty-four hours.

This policy of understanding and sympathy was continued by McNarney's successor, General Clay, and his aides, Generals Huebner, Keys, White, and Harrold. Important work was done by their advisors on Jewish affairs, Rabbi Philip Bernstein, Judge Simon Rifkin, and Judge Louis Levinthal.

The following official statement by General Clay is characteristic of the high-level policy at that time and also gives a highly accurate and understanding picture of the Jewish DP's:

"The behavior of the Jewish DP's has not been a major problem at any time since the surrender of Germany. I wish that I could say the same of all other groups. The Jewish DP's were quickly gathered into communities where their religious and select-

ed community leaders insisted on an orderly pattern of community life. Of course, we have had many minor problems resulting from the large assembly of Jewish DP's in the midst of the people who have caused their suffering.

"Moreover, the unsettled conditions in Germany have made barter trading and black-market operations a common problem. Even in this field the Jewish DP's have not been conspicuous in their activities as compared to other displaced persons groups or, in fact, as compared to the German population itself.

"The Jewish DP's have on the whole established an excellent record insofar as crimes of violence are concerned, and in spite of their very natural hatred of the German people have been remarkably restrained in avoiding incidents of a serious nature with the German population.

"In view of the conditions under which they have had to live in Germany, with their future unsettled and their past suffering clear at hand, their record for preserving law and order is to my mind one of the remarkable achievements which I have witnessed during my more than two years in Germany."

In the latter part of this period, relations between certain local occupation authorities and the Jewish DP's deteriorated, but for this there were specific causes unrelated to over-all policy. So long as the American combat army still furnished the occupation personnel, there was no difficulty. The soldiers of the combat army had seen the German concentration and extermination camps and they themselves had liberated the surviving remnant. Consequently, the attitude of the Army, from general to common soldier, was understanding and sympathetic.

But when the combat veterans were relieved by young soldiers who had not experienced the struggle for liberation, there was a change. The young soldiers had not seen the Germans in their loathsomeness. They saw clean German homes and pretty, accommodating German girls; they heard

anti-Semitic whispers; they were influenced by German officials. While the big black-market deals in official German quarters remained concealed, the attention of Americans was drawn almost exclusively to the DP's, whom they came to regard as a nuisance that complicated an otherwise easy-going routine. The consequence was several extremely unpleasant local conflicts.

THE third and most recent period of occupation policy did not begin suddenly or unexpectedly. It was foreshadowed in Secretary Byrnes' Stuttgart speech on September 6, 1946, and was formulated in the new directive to the Commander in Chief, released on July 15, 1947.

This directive, in force today, is no longer oriented towards the material and ideological disarming of Germany, but towards rehabilitating her as part of the Western European bloc. The main objective has now become "the establishment of stable political and economic conditions in Germany which will enable Germany to make a marked contribution to European recovery."

With this stage, occupation policy entered into a basic conflict with the Jewish DP's. The Jews cannot forgive the Germans—certainly not by directive. In the eyes of the Jews, the Germans have forfeited the right to exercise sovereignty over them and will not recover this right until they themselves have undergone a fundamental change, and, particularly, until their bestial hatred of Jews has been overcome.

But today, as all reports indicate, this hatred is on the rise.

At the beginning of May 1947 it was stated by the ICD (Information Control Division) in Munich that, according to a poll of the German population, anti-Semitic tendencies had increased during the preceding eight months. Nineteen per cent of those questioned declared themselves to be Nazis; 22 per cent supported Nazi ideas; and another 20 per cent declared themselves convinced anti-Semites; in other words, 61 per cent openly avowed anti-Semitism (report in *Neue Zeit*, May 4, 1947). Respon-

sible observers—Rabbis Philip S. Bernstein and James G. Heller and Professor William Haber—agreed that the personal safety of the Jews was insured only by the presence of occupation troops.

Meanwhile, the desecration of Jewish cemeteries has become a common occurrence in Germany. In the British Zone alone, twenty-seven cemeteries have been desecrated. In the American Zone the number is not smaller. My colleagues and I established a cemetery in the village of Schwabhausen-bei-Landsberg for those who had died on the march when the Germans evacuated Dachau. In October 1947, this cemetery was totally destroyed, desecrated, and defaced with painted brown swastikas. In none of these incidents have the culprits been reported by the German population or identified by the German police. Such is the state of German public opinion today. Thousands of war criminals and murderers of Jews are living in Germany, free and undisturbed; none of them is ever caught except when accidentally recognized by a victim.

On April 28 of this year, the Military Governor of Wuerttemberg-Baden, Charles M. La Follette, suspended from office the newly elected Mayor of Schwaebisch-Gmuend, Franz Konrad, because he won the election by using Nazi tactics. In ordering the dismissal the Military Governor said: "Evidence indicated among other things that his campaign was conducted in a Nazi fashion—yellow Stars of David were painted on the market place, Konrad's opponent was described as a 'half-Jew'. . . . The tune of the Horst Wessel Song was sung to the words, 'The SA is on the march and Konrad is with us'."

In the local elections that took place in April in traditionally democratic Hesse, one-third of the votes fell to disguised Nazi groups. On April 29, General Lucius D. Clay said in a press conference: "There are many evidences that Nazi-minded groups, including many former Nazis, are seeking to rise again in German politics." He referred to the show of strength of the new

National Democratic party in the local elections, and predicted increased manifestations of Nazism. (*New York Times*, April 29, 1948).

Dr. Philipp Auerbach, Bavarian State Commissioner for Victims of Political and Racial Persecution, has published a compilation of the official papers of his commissariat, "Anti-Semitism in Bavaria" (in *Neue Welt*, No. 1). It is a gruesome picture. Jews in trains have been insulted, beaten, and thrown out of the cars. Scandalous scenes have taken place in streetcars. The State Commissioner has innumerable affidavits disclosing anti-Semitic acts by conductors and passengers. A German woman, talking about Auschwitz with a Jewish woman, was reviled by fellow passengers: "What do you care about that Jewish sow? What the Allies are doing to the Germans today is much worse than anything that ever happened in Auschwitz." Both were compelled to leave the car. In stores and restaurants wild anti-Semitic scenes are a frequent occurrence. In Garmisch, Memmingen, and other cities, the visit of General Clay to the Munich synagogue was shown in a newsreel. When the speaker declared that six million Jews had been murdered, many members of the audience shouted: "They didn't kill enough of them!" There was deafening applause. In Garmisch the showing of the newsreel was broken off at this point and rioting took place in the street outside, so that the military police had to intervene. In a cabaret in Bad Reichenhall licensed by the German government and the military authorities as politically unobjectionable, these verses were recited:

The Jews are eating chocolate now.

Only six million were gassed. Too bad!

The crowd received this with uproarious applause, although all members of the audience later interviewed declared themselves as non-Nazis. And Commissioner Auerbach cites hundreds of examples of similar incidents in theaters, housing bureaus, government offices, etc. In a recent statement, he declared that the staff of his office is not sufficient even to register all the infor-

mation received about anti-Semitic manifestations (*Unser Weg*, Munich, April 6).

There is also official Jew-baiting, which extends from policemen and government clerks to high state and bi-zonal officials.

THE various provincial governments and political parties have reacted in like pattern. In the Austrian city of Ischl, an anti-Semitic mob attacked the building of the Jewish DP's with cries of "Down with the Jews!" and "Hang the Jews!" The ring-leaders were tried and sentenced by an American military court, whereupon the Austrian government submitted to General Keyes a memorandum stating that "the sentence is not only contrary to the sentiment of justice of the Austrian population, but is likely to provoke extreme unrest." (*Aufbau*, November 7, 1947.)

Bavarian Vice Premier Dr. Mueller demanded in a speech in Marktredwitz that the DP's be placed under German judicial and police jurisdiction, on the ground that they were more to blame for "past developments" (i.e., the war) than the greater part of the German population. He further remarked that when in times of hardship a people can find no vent for its dissatisfaction, there is danger of a revolution. (*Pas-sauer Neue Presse*, February 13, 1947.) Bavarian Minister-President Dr. Erhard declared in a press conference in Nuremberg: "The Bavarian government intends to demand that all DP's be placed under German jurisdiction. . . ." He claimed that subversive elements had infiltrated into these groups (*New York Times*, April 10, 1947). In October 1947 the Committee on Social Questions of the Bavarian Diet demanded the evacuation of the Neu-Freiman DP camp (the best in the zone), on the ground that the camp had become a "hiding place for unsavory elements" (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, October 1947). Somewhat earlier, the bi-zonal committee in Frankfurt demanded the elimination of extra rations for former concentration-camp inmates.

The Germans often try to justify their anti-Jewish sentiment by saying that the DP

camps are centers of black-market activity. This accusation is utterly absurd. The centers of black-market activity are its sources, that is, farmers, industrialists, jobbers, and wholesalers. The Bavarian peasant, for example, sends seventy-five per cent of his eggs and forty per cent of his pork to the black market. Factories and merchants likewise deliver a considerable portion of their products to the black market. In November 1947, a Nazi underground organization was uncovered whose funds came exclusively from black-market deals that included a transaction in precious metals to the value of 45 million marks (*Neue Welt*, December 1947). The DP's themselves participate in the black market only as petty intermediaries—and Jews play the smallest role of all. Whereas the Jews constitute twenty per cent of the total number of DP's, only 105 out of 2200—or 4.7 per cent—of the DP's in penal institutions in the US zone on April 2, 1948 were Jews.

The situation of the Jews in Germany is clearly shown by an open letter of resignation written to Dr. Erhard, the Bavarian Minister-President, by Heinz Guttsman, at that time the sole surviving German Jewish higher government official. Guttsman wrote:

"I have come to realize that National Socialism with all its ramifications is a manifestation of the *German* nature, which broke through after all ethical and moral inhibitions had been swept away by a group of criminal monomaniacs. I have been fortified in this realization by the behavior of the broadest sections of the people, who are again succumbing without resistance to the poison of anti-Semitism and the plague of neo-fascism. . . .

"One is amazed and shaken by the political baseness, the treachery, the stupidity, the lack of good will in the broadest sections of the population. . . .

"The State Commissariat for Victims of Persecution has thus far published only a small portion of its abundance of material supporting my contentions: it is the daily little pinpricks that make life a torment in Germany. . . ."

FOR an understanding of the situation in Germany, it is absolutely necessary to bear in mind that present anti-Semitism in Germany cannot be attributed entirely to the rule of Nazism. Paradoxically, certain aspects of it are grounded precisely in the defeat of Nazism.

First of all there is the *justification complex*. Now that the whole world has become aware of the enormity of Germany's crimes, the national conscience must find some inner alibi for them. The Pope has said that the world should forgive and forget Germany's war crimes, but that is not enough for the German. He himself cannot forget; he has to justify himself to himself. And he does so by telling himself that the German crimes were no crimes at all. The only possible defense of murders too vast to deny is to slander and blacken the victims—the Jews.

The non-Nazi official who collaborates with the enemy—that is, the occupying powers—finds himself impelled to avert the imputation of treason and to win the sympathies of the Nazi masses. An anti-Jewish attitude is the readiest means to hand. This second new element in the rising anti-Semitic tide is the *patriotic complex*.

At the same time the German discovers that the anti-Semitic elements in the armies of occupation are the only ones that show any sympathy for him and his past. Quite naturally he tries to ingratiate himself with precisely these elements. This may be called the *occupation complex*.

The Jew is the only war enemy who is without military protection. He is therefore the only enemy on whom the German can vent his hatred. This is the *xenophobic complex*.

Just as the Germans put the blame for their murders on the victims, they ascribe their present economic hardship not to the heroic world conquerors—the Nazis—but to the DP's. This is the *DP diversion complex*.

German anti-Semitism at present is an autochthonous social reality brought about by Nazi conditioning and the effects of the German defeat. It has nothing whatever to do with the anti-German sentiment of

the Jewish DP's and could therefore not be altered by a change in Jewish attitudes. Nor can the re-education of the German people, which will inevitably require many generations, offer any practical solution to the present problem, which is immediate. We must recognize anti-Semitism as an emergent reality of German postwar life. Inhibited by the former occupation policy, it has reasserted itself with the change in that policy.

WE MUST accept the new development in American occupation policy as a fact. The officials called upon to carry out this policy are fully aware of its paradoxes. General Robertson, Military Governor of the British Zone, declared to the North Rhine Westphalian Diet on April 7, 1948: "Is it strange that I should talk to you like this? Yes, it is strange. But these are strange times. . . ."

In the present situation, as I stated above, Germany is expected to become our ally, the guardian of our European front line. The surviving Jews are and cannot help remaining openly antagonistic to Germany. They are an obstacle to the development of American policy. They have always wanted to leave the country. It was formerly a humanitarian duty to take them out of Germany; it was formerly a moral duty to help the victims of war crimes. But perhaps for that very reason nothing was accomplished. As everyone knows, humanitarian and moral duties somehow do not get themselves carried out. Despite all such obligations and the various resolutions of all the various commissions, it has been impossible since 1945 to obtain one hundred thousand Palestinian visas; and visas for emigration elsewhere have been similarly non-obtainable.

But today the emigration of the Jews from Germany would seem an indispensable adjunct to the success of our general European policy, and particularly our German policy. It is well known that when European security policy demands them, things can be done quickly, both in the national and international sphere. What a pro-Jewish

policy could not accomplish can be accomplished by the necessities of our present pro-German policy. What a DP policy could not do a broad American policy-need can do. What a Palestine policy could not give us can be obtained from a European policy. What as a humanitarian duty was trampled under foot may be respected as a move in the game of power politics. *The resettlement of the Jewish DP's from West Germany must be seen as an integral part of our new American security policy, if not the very basis of its application in Germany.* And since the American Zone of Germany is at the center of the problem, that area must, it would seem, become a chief concern of American-Jewish interest and activity.

The focus of that interest and activity must be on two points:

1. If the newly-created state of Israel is to be able to absorb large numbers of DP's from the American zone of Germany, it is necessary above all to achieve the military and political stabilization of the new nation. Absorption of DP's depends on this stabilization, which in turn depends primarily on the degree to which the great powers are ready to defend the state of Israel from the aggression of the Arab states outside Palestine. This is a question of the utmost urgency. It therefore becomes the task of the leaders of American Jewry to make plain to the American government that the defense of Palestine is an integral and essential part of America's *European* policy, and to persuade the Administration to use its influence with other governments—including the British—on that basis.

2. Since the young state of Israel will not immediately be able to absorb the entire mass of Jewish DP's, and since certain groups among the DP's have at any rate expressed the desire to emigrate to the United States, it also becomes our task to emphasize the needs of American security, and the dangers of the inevitable reactions to the continued presence of Jewish DP's in Germany, as compelling arguments in support of permitting large-scale immigration of DP's to the United States.